

Parker Quartet wows and shines

By Joseph Dalton

Troy

A shining silver line runs through everything the Parker String Quartet plays. On Saturday night in Kiggins Hall, their program was wide-ranging but ever-glowing. The recital, presented by the Friends of Chamber Music, was a welcome return by a quartet whose memorable all-Haydn program stunned audiences in 2010.

Mendelssohn's Quartet No. 3 in D Major, Op. 44 No. 1, started things off. It shouldn't be too hard to make Mendelssohn shine, especially when he's writing in the bright key of D Major. The Parker took to the writing with expected ease, applying a light and lovely touch from the start. Yet each movement also took on a bit more weight and substance. A dab of individuality and personality was obvious in the third movement's solo by first violinist Daniel Chong, which ended with a gentle sliding pitch.

It seems to be the season of Thomas Ades around here lately, as music by the British master — still in his 40s — keeps turning up on programs here and there. Every work of Ades shows copious amount of invention, but this one, at least, wasn't quite so hyperactive.

Despite the idyllic title, "Arcadia" is rather gritty and unmoored. Actually, land and sea are the alternating themes of its seven short movements. Yet all of it seems to float.

The instruments operated in their own orbits of quirky but interconnected lines before settling into an extremely hushed hymn-like finale. The Parker

Review

Parker String Quartet

- **When:** 7 p.m. Saturday
- **Where:** Emma Willard School, Troy
- **Length:** Two hours with one intermission

showed great accuracy and maintained its luminous sound despite the demands of the writing.

Shostakovich's Quartet No. 9 occupied the concert's second half. The final effect of its five interconnected movements wasn't as grim as usual, but the Parker didn't flinch at letting the shadows of Soviet-era darkness settle in. The opening movement has a kind of fate motif, and the players each dug in their bows for a certain steeliness.

There were extended passages in the Ades and the Shostakovich that had surprising similarities. They consisted of several measures of dissonant chords played by the full quartet pizzicato in suspended, kind of staggering rhythms.

The Parker Quartet gave a totally different sound to each. That speaks to the ensemble's ability to apply thoughtful attention to the character of each work, while still maintaining its strong emphasis of strict accuracy combined with beautiful tone color.

A dark dance by Ervin Schulhoff was the encore, offering yet another flavor to a most satisfying evening.

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